

**Town Meeting Coordinating Committee Meeting  
Minutes from December 9, 2008**

**1. Call to Order:** This meeting began at 5:20pm. Present were: Carol Gray, Peggy Roberts, Mary Streeter, Judy Simpson, Nonny Burack, Dorwenda Bynum-Lewis, and Harry Brooks.

**2. Minutes:** Mary moved and Nonny seconded that we adopt the minutes of October 17 (after edits). The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous.

**3. Review of TMCC Events Prior to Town Meeting:**

- **Informational forum, "Money: Where Does It Go? Where Should It Go?:"**  
Mary thought the speakers came off very well. The superintendent presented very well. Carol thought we could do more with publicity (e.g., make sure scroll ads and newspaper ads get in with lots of advance notice). Carol said Kevin Eddings, a Town Meeting member, suggested the packets have a cover letter saying what's in the packet and/or putting time sensitive materials on the top of the stack of materials in the packet. Judy thought something on the front of the envelope (e.g., a sticker or stamp) would be helpful. Mary suggested printing out a series of address labels that would be inexpensive and could be put on the envelope. It was suggested that the sticker be in a different color and with a graphic if possible to catch people's attention. Dorwenda volunteered to design the labels. Carol asked if someone could follow up with Kevin to let him know his suggestion was received and is being implemented. Mary said she would do that. Carol said for the next forum it would be nice to try to have 'phone in' ability for at-home viewers to call in with questions. Harry said the Rotary Club installed four phone lines at ACTV so it should be possible to just plug in a phone for the next forum.
- **Warrant Review:** Carol read the evaluations that Peggy had collected. All said they found the warrant review helpful or somewhat helpful. A couple people mentioned more depth, particularly on zoning articles, might be helpful. Nonny said it would be nice if there were a way to have a questionnaire that could be downloaded for people watching at home to send us feedback. Carol suggested the techie folks have a link on the town website which Peggy could announce during her remarks at the warrant review. It was suggested that perhaps Harry could speak to ACTV to see if they could have a message showing on the bottom of the screen saying how to find the link to give input. Carol said if the warrant review were live, it would be nice if there were a way that people could call in with questions.
- **Miscellaneous:** Judy asked if we want to have a disc of the forum on the Town Meeting shelf at the Jones Library. It was agreed that it would be good to have that. Harry said he would get a copy of the disc. Mary suggested we expand the TM list-serve by emailing all the TM members we know saying if you want to be on the TM list-serve, just reply to this email. Peggy suggested we talk to reporters and do a letter to the editor saying what forums are available for viewing from the Town Meeting shelf at the library. Peggy suggested we do the letter to the editor after the holiday season. Mary said the Town Manager's budget is scheduled to come out on Jan. 16 so it might be helpful to have the letter to the editor after that. Dorwenda suggested the letter to the editor go in after the inauguration.

Carol mentioned that Terry Forrest had made a suggestion that there be a running tally during Town Meeting budget discussions of what has been appropriated

posted electronically for Town Meeting members to see. Dorwenda said someone had made that suggestion to her as well. Carol raised a concern that the running tally idea contributes to a problem of how departments at the end could be seen as being 'out of luck' since there was no money left on the running total. She said she would be more comfortable with a running total if there were an impartial way of determining which departments come first. Judy suggested we have a subcommittee to discuss how departments are presented at Town Meeting. Carol, Dorwenda and Harry said they would work on this issue. It was emphasized that we should get recommendations to the Finance Committee and Select Board early on (e.g., in January) so that there would be time to implement ideas. Carol asked if anyone could get back to Terry Forrest telling him that his suggestion was being discussed. Judy said she would call Terry about this.

Dorwenda asked if there was Amherst Bulletin coverage of TMCC events. It was discussed how the coverage has been spotty and at times inaccurate. Dorwenda suggested we go to talk to the Bulletin to try to improve publicity. Dorwenda said she would be willing to hand-deliver announcements to the Gazette and the Bulletin and then follow up to make sure the announcements get in. Peggy suggested the paper could have a box posting Town Meeting events. Dorwenda said she would speak to them about doing such a box announcing the dates for the warrant review, the forum, the bus tour and the precinct meetings and inviting all members of the general public to come.

Harry said ACTV is always looking for volunteers to help manage the scroll ads. Peggy said it used to be that all government announcements were on Channel 17, but now they are on channel 12 in a very long scroll. Harry will talk to ACTV and to Larry Schaffer about this.

- **Precinct Meetings:** Mary said the early schedule of precinct meetings helped enormously to put together meetings. Carol said attendance for precincts 7 and 8 was good and it was very helpful to have Gerry Weiss there. Harry said his meeting was small but helpful. Carol said she phoned everyone in precinct 7 and that worked well for attendance.

Peggy pointed out that it was important to have the warrant signed early. Carol suggested we send an email to the Select Board, Harrison Gregg, the Town Manager, the Planning Board and the Finance Committee to thank them for signing the warrant early and posting a draft of zoning and other articles in advance. The email can include a mention that having that information in advance resulted in concerns about articles being voiced and addressed in advance of Town Meeting instead of taking up more time on the floor of town meeting.

#### **4. Suggestions and Priorities for our work in January and February:**

- Peggy announced that Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for April 29 and the Annual Town Election will be March 31.
- Carol suggested TMCC highlight Town Meeting as part of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, by doing some oral histories or newspaper articles highlighting long-time Town Meeting members. Mary mentioned Baer Terkel's book with some of the old history of Town Meeting.
- Carol also suggested we set up a meeting with Harrison before Annual Town Meeting to discuss how things would go as we had talked about in the past.

- Mary said it would be good to have a forum on ACTV about being a Town Meeting member, the pros and cons, benefits and responsibilities, and how you become a town meeting member.
- Mary thinks we need some kind of a budget forum.
- Mary would like to work on increasing information on the TMCC page. She thinks we should make sure we keep up with precinct meetings.
- Judy said it would be good to send postcards reminding TM members that their time is up. Judy gave Mary a reminder postcard that could be printed up to announce this.
- Judy suggested we urge TM members to go to the Finance Committee meetings on Thursday evenings and a notice to this effect could be sent out on the list-serve. Carol added that we should encourage participation in all committees working on the budget, particularly the Select Board since the Select Board was supposed to be the policy-making body.
- Harry asked that we keep alive the issue of electronic voting.

**5. TMCC webpage:** Mary encouraged members to give feed back on the TMCC webpage.

**6. Scheduling of TMCC Meetings:** The next TMCC meeting will be Tuesday, January 13, 2009, 5pm-7pm. Nonny will let us know where the meeting will be.

**7. Adjournment:** Nonny moved and Judy seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 6:50pm.

**Documents Distributed at the meeting:**

- Agenda for today's meeting.
- Minutes from October 17.

Carol Gray, Secretary